

Skills 360 – How to Get Good Customer Service (Part 1)

Discussion Questions

1. Do you have any bad customer service experiences?
2. When you call a customer service line, are you usually friendly or unfriendly?
3. Do you have any techniques or strategies for getting good customer service?

Vocabulary

Defective: made incorrectly; "I think this chair is defective. The lever that adjusts the height doesn't work properly."

To put on hold: if you are talking on the telephone and "put someone on hold," you ask them to wait; "The receptionist put me on hold while she searched for my file."

To make your blood boil: to make you very angry; "Charles values promptness. It really makes his blood boil when people are late for appointments."

Timing: the day or time you choose to do something or when something is planned to happen; "The timing of your fundraising event is very important; avoid long weekends when most people are out of town."

To build up: to increase or develop over time or gradually; "Over the past 25 years, the government of China has built up huge US dollar reserves."

To be overwhelmed: to have too much of something, such as work, emotion, or stress, to deal with; "Many workers complain that the downside to taking holidays is feeling overwhelmed with work when they return to the office."

Plum: a "plum" job or position is a very good, rewarding, or desirable one; "Jerry left the company for a plum job with the government; he's got a great salary but doesn't have to spend much time in the office."

Rep: short for "representative," as in sales rep or customer service rep; "The sales department invites all regional sales reps to apply for the new management position."

To dig: to use your hand to try to find something; "Tom, could you dig through filing cabinet for that last invoice from the power company?"

To rummage: to search for something among many other things; "Let's organize the supplies cupboard. I'm tired of rummaging around for an hour every time I need something."

Sense of urgency: a feeling that something is very important and must be done soon; "The safety inspector says we should have a sense of urgency about installing a second fire exit on this floor."

To backfire: if a plan or activity "backfires," it has a negative effect or a result that is opposite of what you wanted; "Although they tested well, the new TV ads backfired. People really hated them."

To be irked: to be annoyed or bothered; "I am always irked whenever Doug mentions all the awards he's received."

To stick to the facts: to talk about only the facts of a situation or exactly what happened; "The HR manager asked the employee to stick to the facts about the problem with his manager."

To go on: to talk a lot or too much about something; "All right folks, I'd love to go on about the game last night, but we have work to do."

To (not) give a hoot: to (not) care about something, informally; "Do you actually give a hoot about this project? Because you haven't been working very hard on it."

Don't hesitate: we say "don't hesitate" to do something to encourage someone to do it or to not be shy or embarrassed to do it; "If you have any questions or concerns about my proposal, please don't hesitate to contact me."

Balanced perspective: if you have a "balanced perspective" of something, you can think about both sides of the issue; "The union and management agreed on a mediator they thought would bring a balanced perspective to the negotiations."

Verbose: wordy, or using too many words to express an idea; "A good technician can explain difficult concepts to the average person without being too verbose."

Buddy: a friend, informally; used primarily by men; "I just found out that an old college buddy made a lot of money in the sale of his tech start-up."

Bang-up job: a very good or successful piece of work; "Way to go Dierdre. You did a bang-up job on that report."

Tack: a way of doing, talking, or thinking about something; "We haven't had much luck hiring through the newspaper ads, so let's try a different tack."

At the end of the day: after considering everything; "It's great to build your network Graham, but at the end of the day your success as a salesman is about making sales."

Backflip: a backwards flip in the air; if someone "does backflips," he does a lot to help someone else; "Kate is a great assistant. She'll do backflips for me any time of day on any problem."

Transcript

Welcome back to the Skills 360 podcast. I'm your host Tim Simmons, and today I want to help you *get* good customer service.

You probably know what *bad* customer service looks like. We've all been there. Maybe you've stood in line at a computer store to return a **defective** piece of equipment and the clerk asks you rudely "Well, how do you know it's broken? Did you plug it in?" Or you've called your phone company to change your service and when you finally make it through the **voice menus** to a real person, you get **put on hold** for 10 minutes. It's crazy, right? We are paying customers, and we get treated like this? So if you've ever felt your **blood boil** in situations like these, listen up. Let's talk about how to get *good* customer service.

For starters, you have to think about **timing**. Basically, the busier people are, the more stress they have and the less time they'll be able to give you. So avoid Mondays. On Mondays you've got business, and frustration, that has **built up** over the weekend, and customer service agents are usually **overwhelmed** on that day. Also think about the *time* of day. If you're calling in to a customer service department or centre, do it early. The early shifts are considered **plum**, so the more experienced, and more able, customer service **reps** work at those times.

Now, you might think it's *their* job to serve *you*. And you're right. It is. But if you can make their job a bit easier, they'll do it better. That starts with having the right paperwork and information ready. If you have to **dig** in your bag for your receipt, or if you have to **rummage** through your desk for your account number while the person *waits*, they'll be frustrated. You know what information they'll ask for, so be prepared.

You can not only make their job easier, but you might also make it more pleasant by being pleasant yourself. Some people think they'll get better results if they communicate a **sense of urgency** and frustration. But in many cases, that **backfires**. Be polite and friendly, and you'll probably get the same attitude back. Remember that it's a *person* you're talking to. That person can want to help you a lot or just a little. And the difference might depend on how much they like you. Use their name and try to create a personal connection. Even if you are really **irked**, maintain a positive attitude.

Okay, we've covered *how* we communicate. Now let's talk about *what* we communicate. If you're dealing with customer service, you either have a need or a problem. And you need to be able to explain that need or problem very clearly. **Stick to the facts**. Describe exactly what happened or your situation. Don't **go on** about things they don't **give a hoot** about. And don't give them your life story.

What you should do, however, is give them your *customer* story. Tell them why you bought the product or service. **Don't hesitate** to say something about the positive aspects of whatever it is you bought. This shows that you've got a **balanced perspective**. Still, tell them what your expectations and needs are. But remember, don't get too **verbose**.

So, what might a customer story sound like? How about something like this: "Well, you guys came highly recommended by a marketing [buddy](#). I told him we wanted t-shirts for our event that people would keep for a long time, and he said you folks would do a [bang-up job](#). The quality of the shirts is fantastic. But I'm concerned about how the colors look. Our event is in two weeks and we need to make sure these shirts look awesome." That's a much better [tack](#) than "We ordered shirts and they don't look good."

[At the end of the day](#), you can't expect people to do [backflips](#) for you just because you say you've got a problem. So avoid the busy times, stay calm, be nice, make a personal connection, and stick to your customer story.

Of course, sometimes your problem has *not* been solved and you need to complain. That may require some slightly different strategies. Tune in next time to find out.

That's all for today. If you'd like to test yourself on what we've just covered, have a look at the [myBEOonline.com](#) website. There you'll find a quiz about today's show as well as a complete transcript.

So long. And see you again soon.

Review

1. Why does Tim mention returning a piece of equipment to a store and calling a phone company?
 - A To give examples of bad customer service.
 - B To contrast in-person service and telephone service.
 - C To show which type of company needs to have good service.
 - D To warn against complaining too aggressively.

2. What would be the best time to call a customer service call center?
 - A Monday morning
 - B Sunday afternoon
 - C Tuesday afternoon
 - D Tuesday morning

3. Tim says that making a customer service worker's job easier starts with...
 - A ...asking his or her name
 - B ...having necessary information ready
 - C ...describing your problem or need
 - D ...stating your line of business

4. According to Tim, what can you do to get a polite and friendly attitude from a customer service agent?
 - A Call at a busy time
 - B Give them your customer story
 - C Be polite and friendly yourself
 - D Answer questions quickly

5. When describing your need or problem, you should stick to the _____.
 - A Feelings
 - B Facts
 - C Consequences
 - D Solutions

6. Which of the following does Tim mention as elements of a good customer story? [choose all that apply]
 - A Possible solutions
 - B Positive aspects of what you have purchased
 - C What the competition offers
 - D Your expectations and needs
 - E Why you purchased the product or service
 - F Your personal background

Review Answers

1. Why does Tim mention returning a piece of equipment to a store and calling a phone company?

A To give examples of bad customer service

2. What would be the best time to call a customer service call center?

D Tuesday morning

3. Tim says that making a customer service worker's job easier starts with...

B ...having necessary information ready

4. According to Tim, what can you do to get a polite and friendly attitude from a customer service agent?

C be polite and friendly yourself

5. When describing your need or problem, you should stick to the _____.

B facts

6. Which of the following does Tim mention as elements of a good customer story? [choose all that apply]

B positive aspects of what you have purchased

D your expectations and needs

E why you purchased the product or service

Online Practice

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